

Work / Life

It's Your Life,
So Make the
Most of It.

Highlights

- *It's Your Life, So Make the Most of It.*
- *Use Your Head To Reduce Your Stress.*
- *Need Help with the English Language?*
- *Use for a Fresh, Ripe Avocado*
- *"Break a Leg."*
- *The Awakening*
- *Get a Fresh Start with Fruit!*
- *Saving for the Big Day*
- *Guide to Retirement Living*

NAVIGATOR

One of the most important ingredients in your personal development is taking real responsibility for your actions. This requires that you consciously become the cause of the results that you want. Refuse to behave like a victim or to wait for someone to save you from life's problems.

Keys to Self-Responsibility

To reach your full potential, you need to take responsibility for your actions in meaningful ways.

Consciousness. You have a choice—you can pay attention and be fully present when you are making critical decisions, such as working on a project, reading your performance review, or deciding whether to have another drink. Or you can be physically present but mentally absent during these activities. Either way, you are responsible for the level of consciousness you bring to any occasion, and you are responsible for the results.

Decisions and actions. It is tempting to "disconnect" from our choices, to insist that someone or something is driving us to behave the way we do. Other people don't make you talk or act in certain ways. You are responsible for how you speak and listen, whether you act rationally or not, whether you treat others fairly or unfairly, whether you keep your promises or break them. Once you recognize that you are the source of your own decisions and actions, you are far more likely to proceed wisely and to act in ways that will not cause embarrassment or regret later.

Fulfillment of desires. A major cause of unhappiness or frustration is imagining that someone will come along to "rescue" you—to solve your problems and fulfill your wishes. A self-responsible person recognizes that no one is coming to make life right or to "fix" things. You acknowledge that nothing will get better unless you do something to make it happen.

Beliefs and values. Many people are happy to reflect passively what others believe and value. Or they assume that their ideas arise naturally out of their feelings by instinct. Self-responsible people work to become aware of their beliefs and values, to critically scrutinize them, to seek out people who see things differently, and then to make up their own minds.

Setting priorities. The way we spend time and energy is either in sync with our values or out of sync with what we claim is important. If you understand that the way you prioritize your time is your own choice, you are more likely to correct the contradictions. Instead of being overwhelmed or neglecting people and activities that are important to you, you reexamine your values or set priorities that make more sense.

Choice of companions. You can blame and resent others when they repeatedly hurt or disappoint you. You can feel sorry for yourself. Or you can recognize your responsibility for choosing with whom you spend time and make different choices.

Actions in response to feelings and emotions. When you're angry, you have the urge to lash out. When you're hurt, you may feel like sulking. When you're impatient, you may want to drive too fast. But you don't have to act on every feeling or urge. When you accept responsibility for the actions you take, you act more thoughtfully, less impulsively, and with better results.

Happiness. If you believe your happiness is primarily in your own hands, you give yourself enormous power. You don't wait for events or other people to make you happy. If something is wrong, your response is not, "Someone's got to do something!" but "What can I do?"

One's own life and well being. In taking responsibility for your life, you will recognize other people's rights to do the same. Other people do not exist as a means to your ends, any more than you live in service to their goals. People may choose to help one another voluntarily. Life is usually more pleasant when they do so. But no one is born with a right to other people's assets or energy, despite the attitude of entitlement that is so prevalent today.

Learning self-responsibility. You can become more responsible by asking yourself two powerful questions several times a day:

What possibilities for action exist?

What can I do?

Instead of just saying, "I want," try asking yourself, "What am I willing to do to get what I want?" To become more aware of whether you are acting responsibly, ask yourself, "If I wanted to be fully self-responsible right now, what would I be doing?"

Try this exercise: Every morning for one week, write 6 to 10 endings to each of the following sentences:

If I operate a little more self-responsibly today, I will . . .

If I am five percent more self-responsible in my relationships, I will . . .

If I accept responsibility for my choices and decisions, I will . . .

Don't worry about what you should say. Just write the first words that come to mind. Over the weekend, reread the week's sentences. Then write 6 to 10 endings for this sentence:

If any of what I wrote this week is true, it might be helpful if I . . .

Done consistently, this exercise helps to shift your mental focus. Changes are often quick and dramatic.

(Source: Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D., nathaniel@nathanielbranden.com. Originally published in *Bottom Line Personal*, 9/1/00. Reprinted by permission.)

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Use Your Head To Reduce Your Stress.

1. Just for a day, carry an index card with you. Every time a self-limiting thought like "I'll never get ????" pops into your head, turn it into a strategy statement. Example: "I'll never get promoted." Change to "I'll probably get promoted if I do a bang-up job on this new project."

2. Learn to turn every complaint (yours or anyone else's) into a question. Complaints are statements of defeat. Questions, on the other hand, beg to be answered and send you on a solution search. For example, if you catch yourself saying, "Everyone's in a rotten mood today!" (a complaint), turn it into a question: "What can I do to lighten things up?"

3. Watch your language! Especially when you talk to yourself. The next time you trip up, notice what you say. "Idiot! Jerk! You always do that!" Stop right in the middle of the verbal self-abuse and ask what you would say to a good friend who had just made the same mistake. More likely, it'd be, "Hey, you did the best you could under the circumstances."

4. The next time you want to do something but feel you shouldn't, ask, "Why not?" or "What's the harm?" Once you consider the options instead of just reacting in a knee-jerk fashion, you'll find a way.

5. Conversely, when you find yourself thinking, "I don't want to, but I really should," think again! Don't just say "yes" out of habit. Is the request appropriate? Are you the right person? Can you negotiate a later deadline? If you can't say, "Yes, I'd be happy to" and mean it, don't take it on! Be creative and negotiate. Or be tactful and decline.

6. When your mind is operating at a breakneck speed and you feel like your life is careening out of control, stop for a one-minute "planning" break. Write down the top 10 things you have to get done today. Then rank each item in order of how important it really is. Prioritize, or get help!

7. At least three times a day, take a one-minute "retreat." Stand still, take five slow, deep belly breaths (inhale to the count of six, release to the count of six). Stop for one minute of centered breathing, and you'll be more efficient following this "retreat."

8. Next time you find yourself playing the "blame game"—"She makes my blood boil," "That jerk ruined my day," or "This place depresses me"—consider the power you're giving away. You can't control annoying people, but you can control how you respond. No one can stress you without your help. Either shake it off or take action to improve the situation. But don't empower "the enemy" by getting stressed.

9. When your brain screams, "Hurry up. You're not doing enough," check your expectations. Is your to-do list truly doable? Have you stopped to review your "done" list? Just one self-pat on the back will remind you that you're making progress. Go from task to task without any pause for applause, and you'll end up feeling overworked, underappreciated, and incompetent.

10. Feed your esteem. If you want less stress, you'll have to tame your brain. Start each day with an affirming statement: "I'm prepared, pumped, and competent" or "It's the start of a great new day." Remember, your surroundings are bombarding you all day long with subtle and not-so-subtle messages of how "challenging" things are. Start running your own tapes on hope, confidence, and appreciation for what's right in your day!

(Source: Suzanne Zoglio, motivational speaker and author of *Create A Life That Tickles Your Soul* (named "Outstanding Book of the Year" and "Most Life-Changing" in the Independent Publisher Book Awards 2000.) FREE motivational newsletter at www.tickleyoursoul.com)

WEB SITE PICKS

<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html>

Writing a term paper? Got a proposal you need to present? Perhaps you're just stumped on your latest crossword puzzle. In any of these scenarios, you need to face facts: The English language can be downright confusing. Even the experts disagree about what is "proper" and what isn't. At this site, you can get some great help!

Find out if you should be using "whose" or "who's," "effect" or "affect," or any of dozens of other commonly misused words. When you end a sentence with a preposition, are you really wrong or are you actually using Standard English? Find out the answers to these and many other questions about our tricky language, and you'll sound like an expert! Listed alphabetically, you'll find a growing list of some of the most commonly misused words in the English language.

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."
—Thomas Alva Edison

HUMOR

Interesting Definitions

Etc.: A sign to make others believe that you know more than you actually do.

Experience: The name people give to their mistakes.

Atom bomb: An invention to end all inventions.

Diplomat: A person who tells you to go to hell in such a way that you actually look forward to the trip.

Opportunist: A person who starts taking a bath if he accidentally falls into a river.

Optimist: A person who while falling from the Eiffel tower says in midway "See I am not injured yet."

Miser: A person who lives poor so that he can die rich.

Father: A banker provided by nature.

Boss: Someone who is early when you are late and late when you are early.

Politician: One who shakes your hand before elections and your confidence after.

Wife to husband: "Rodney! What's your excuse for coming home at this time of the night?"

Husband to wife: "Golfing with friends, my dear."

Wife to husband: "What? At 2 a.m.?!"

Husband to wife: "Yes. We used night clubs."

"Ideals are like stars: you will not succeed in reaching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you will reach your destiny."

—Carl Schurz

BEAUTY TIP

Use for a Fresh, Ripe Avocado

In a recipe, after you are finished peeling the avocado, rub the flesh side of the skin on your hands. The natural oils and vitamins in the layer of avocado right under the skin are especially good for your hands. Rub it in well. Then, lightly rinse off the bit of residue that may remain. Try to go awhile without using soap on your hands to allow this natural "lotion" to sink deep into your skin layers. They will be beautifully soft and will cost you nothing but the time it took to apply the natural skin conditioner!

PROVERB OF THE MONTH

"Break a Leg."

In acting, this saying is used instead of "good luck" because many actors believe wishing someone well before a performance brings bad luck.

The reason behind this is, way back in Shakespearian times, many peasants worked all day, didn't have weekends off, and only had one form of entertainment. Plays. Many of them could not read, and of course there was no television.

When these people went to the plays, there were no chairs, so they were right up next to the stage, and often they rested their heads on the stage.

These people became so entranced with the play that they would often begin to drool all over the stage, which could cause the actors to slip and fall, and sometimes break their leg. So if you broke your leg, you had given the audience such a good show; they had drooled all over the stage.

"Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it; it's only for wallowing in."

—Katherine Mansfield

WORDS OF WISDOM

The Awakening

A time comes in your life when you finally get it. When, in the midst of all your fears and insanity, you stop dead in your tracks, and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out—ENOUGH!

Enough fighting and crying or struggling to hold on.

And, like a child quieting down after a blind tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you shudder once or twice, you blink back your tears and begin to look at the world through new eyes.

This is your awakening.

You realize it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change or for happiness, safety, and security to come galloping over the next horizon.

You come to terms with the fact that neither of you is Prince Charming or Cinderella and that in the real world there aren't always fairy tale endings (or beginnings for that matter), and that any guarantee of "happily ever after" must begin with YOU. And in the process, a sense of serenity is born of acceptance.

You awaken to the fact that you are not perfect and that not everyone will always love, appreciate, or approve of who or what you are, and that's OK. They are entitled to their own views and opinions.

And you learn the importance of loving and championing yourself. And in the process, a sense of new-found confidence is born of self-approval.

You stop complaining and blaming other people for the things they did to you (or didn't do for you), and you learn that the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected.

You learn that people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say, that not everyone will always be there for you, and that it's not always about you.

So, you learn to stand on your own and to take care of yourself. And in the process, a sense of safety and security is born of self-reliance.

You stop judging and pointing fingers, you begin to accept people as they are and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties. And in the process, a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness.

You realize that much of the way you view yourself, and the world around you, is as a result of all the messages and opinions that have been ingrained into your psyche.

And you begin to sift through all the junk you've been fed about how you should behave, how you should look, how much you should weigh, what you should wear, what you should do for a living, how much money you should make, what you should drive, how and where you should live, who you should marry, the importance of having and raising children, and what you owe your parents, family, and friends.

You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. And you begin reassessing and redefining who you are and what you really stand for.

You learn the difference between wanting and needing, and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with. And in the process, you learn to go with your instincts.

You learn that it is truly in giving that we receive. And that there is power and glory in creating and contributing, and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a "consumer" looking for your next fix.

You learn that principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a bygone era but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life.

You learn that you don't know everything. It's not your job to save the world, and you can't teach a pig to sing.

You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to say NO.

You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and that martyrs get burned at the stake.

Then you learn about love.

How to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving, and when to walk away.

You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be.

You stop trying to control people, situations, and outcomes.

And you learn that alone does not mean lonely.

You also stop working so hard at putting your feelings aside, smoothing things over, and ignoring your needs.

You learn that feelings of entitlement are perfectly OK, that it is your right to want things and to ask for the things you want, and that sometimes it is necessary to make demands.

You come to the realization that you deserve to be treated with love, kindness, sensitivity, and respect, and you won't settle for less.

And you learn that your body really is your temple. And you begin to care for it and treat it with respect. You begin to eat a balanced diet, drink more water, and take more time to exercise.

You learn that being tired fuels doubt, fear, and uncertainty, and so you take more time to rest. And, just as food fuels the body, laughter fuels our soul. So you take more time to laugh and to play.

You learn that, for the most part, you get in life what you believe you deserve and that much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You learn that anything worth achieving is worth working for and that wishing for something to happen is different than working toward making it happen.

More importantly, you learn that in order to achieve success you need direction, discipline, and perseverance.

You also learn that no one can do it all alone, and that it's OK to risk asking for help.

You learn the only thing you must truly fear is the greatest robber baron of all: FEAR itself.

You learn to step right into and through your fears because you know that whatever happens you can handle it, and to give in to fear is to give away the right to live life on your own terms.

And you learn to fight for your life and not to squander it living under a cloud of impending doom.

You learn that life isn't always fair, you don't always get what you think you deserve, and sometimes bad things happen to unsuspecting, good people.

On these occasions, you learn not to personalize things.

You learn that God isn't punishing you or failing to answer your prayers.

It's just life happening.

And you learn to deal with evil in its most primal state—the ego.

You learn that negative feelings such as anger, envy, and resentment must be understood and redirected, or they will suffocate the life out of you and poison the universe that surrounds you.

You learn to admit when you are wrong and to build bridges instead of walls.

You learn to be thankful and to take comfort in many of the simple things we take for granted,

things that millions of people upon the Earth can only dream about: a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft, warm bed, a long, hot shower.

Slowly, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself, and you make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and to never, ever settle for less than your heart's desire.

And you hang a wind chime outside your window so you can listen to the wind.

And you make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting, and to stay open to every wonderful possibility.

Finally, with courage in your heart, you take a stand, you take a deep breath, and you begin to design the life you want to live as best you can. --Author unknown

HEALTHY FOOD TIP

Get a Fresh Start with Fruit!

You know you ought to eat something in the morning. After all, you need food for fuel. And eating right at breakfast can help set the tone for a whole day of healthy eating. Try this: Pick pink grapefruit instead of white, and you'll get 93 times more cancer-preventing beta carotene. Half a medium papaya will give you more than your daily requirement of vitamin C.

"Tolerance is the positive and cordial effort to understand another's beliefs, practices, and habits without necessarily sharing or accepting them."
—Joshua Leibman

FINANCES

Saving for the Big Day

When is your "Big Day?" Is it when your children go to college, is it when you buy your first house, or is it when you retire? Do you have more than one Big Day? Whenever it is, be prepared for all your Big Days by starting or increasing your savings now.

There are several ways to save. One of the better methods for many people is through U.S. Savings Bonds. The interest is better than most other forms of savings, they are remarkably safe, and, in some circumstances, you may qualify for tax-free payout on the interest.

For up-to-date information, check with other savings venues such as money markets, banks, credit unions, etc., but look at these commercial rate comparisons (source: *Wall Street Journal*, 2/28/02) and ask yourself where you want to put your money:

Money Market Acct	1.09%
6-month CD	1.77%
1-year CD	2.07%
30-month CD	2.92%
EE-Bond	4.07%
I-Bond	4.40%

Your deposits in most commercial savings institutions are insured, but there is a limit. With U.S. Savings Bonds, there is no such limit, and no one has ever lost a penny on them.

Depending on your income, you may be able to collect tax-free interest on U.S. Savings Bonds when you use them to pay for things like higher education. All the rules are easy to understand and are available on the Internet at <http://savingsbonds.gov>. In fact, you can get any detailed information you need at that site, including the current rate paid on any bond.

Savings bonds are safe and easy to use. Should you lose a bond for any reason, it can be replaced. If you run short of money while on travel and have a U.S. Savings Bond with you, step into any bank, present your identification, and they'll be happy to cash the bond for you.

How are you going to save for your Big Day? In June, NASA Headquarters is holding its annual campaign for U.S. Savings Bonds. Make sure you have full access to Employee Express because, starting this year, you must go through Employee Express to make any changes in your contributions.

SENIOR CARE TIP

Guide to Retirement Living

The Summer 2002 issue of *Guide to Retirement Living* is now available in the WorkLife Library. This issue contains over 700 detailed listings of every senior living option (assisted living communities, retirement communities, nursing and rehabilitation centers) in the Suburban MD, Northern VA, and Washington, DC region.

"Standing in the middle of the road is very dangerous; you get knocked down by the traffic from both sides."
—Margaret Thatcher

Questions/Comments to:

Evelin Saxinger, Work/Life Manager,
esaxinge@hq.nasa.gov or 358-1311.

An online version of this newsletter may be found at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codec/cc/navig-5.pdf>